THE MYCOPHILE

Newsletter of the North American Mycological Association

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PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

July 2020 – August 2021

This year NAMA flourished like Oregon's humongous honey fungus mushrooms despite COVID and the sadness of canceling the annual foray, which would have been held at Trout Lodge in Missouri. Luckily, we will foray there in 2022.

Thanks to generous donations, increased membership, and a healthy endowment account, we finished the year in excellent financial condition. Treasurer Gates' annual report provides the details. I initiated some small fundraising steps such as adding an Amazon Smile link to our website, selling gift memberships over the holidays, and selling copies of *Mycotopia* at a discounted price in partnership with the publisher (Chelsea Green). We currently are raising funds through the silent auction and a donation box. Please visit them.

We know from a survey we conducted in 2020 that the annual foray and *The Mycophile* are the benefits our members most value. Happily, *The Mycophile* remained as lively and lovely as ever thanks to editor Karen Monger's dedication and creativity, and to the interesting articles and images contributed by our members. Foray planning, led by Sam Landes, with heroic input from Colorado Mycological Society President Jon Sommer and NAMA Executive Secretary Bruch Reed, has had most of our focus in the past four months of 2021.

We also added a new benefit for members: Zoom presentations which allowed us to live up to our purpose of "promoting, pursuing, and advancing mycology."

We went on to host monthly programs, starting with Eugenia Bone on psychedelic mushrooms, followed by Chef Jeremy Umansky on Koji, Scott Pavelle on the Bolete Filter he created in collaboration with other NAMA members, Deborah Lewis, curator of the Ada Hayden Herbarium at Iowa State University, and Michael Scott Zirpoli of Evergreen State College.

This series, envisioned by NAMA Treasurer Melodie Gates, filled quickly, and we received many positive responses after each presentation. Immediately after some sessions, we received lifetime memberships and donations. And it was just plain fun and heartwarming to be in cyberspace together, learning, chatting, and asking questions. That being said, creating and presenting it added enormously to the workload of all the officers involved, and we couldn't have accomplished it without the expertise of then webmaster Jane Onorati.

We also are mentoring and benefitting from a Public Relations intern, Kendra Bries, who is completing her bachelor's degree in Public Relations at Iowa State University's Greenlee School of Journalism. You can see one of the immediate effects of the excellent ideas she has shared with us on our redesigned homepage, now announcing our name in the three major languages of North America. She has also conceived some outreach documents to help us contact "emerging mycologists" and a press release address list.

To move us forward into 2022, when we will have a new President, I am proposing the following measures:

1. With nearly 100 affiliated clubs and 1300+ individual members, NAMA is too complex for a group of volunteers scattered across the continent to administer at the level dues-paying members should expect. Moreover, the organizations we could compare ourselves to, such as the Audobon Society or American Orchid Society, have professional staff. Thus, with the support of the Executive officers, I am proposing that we strengthen the role of the Executive Secretary, our only compensated position, by changing the title to Chief Operations Officer, and significantly enhancing the compensation and duties assigned.

2. My goal as President has been to focus on our members and affiliate clubs, so this year, I propose continuing our zoom presentation series in the late fall and early spring months. Unlike last year, this year, we hope to offer the presentations to all our affiliate clubs to use for their monthly meetings or other occasions. We'll

COVER PHOTO: *Amanita muscara var. flavivolvata*, photo by Robert Gergulics

discuss and vote on this proposal in our August 13 annual meeting, and if it passes, we'll need input from the clubs about the speaker selections and schedules. (This past year, Melodie Gates and I recruited the speakers).

Even with a staff member, we need volunteers. The lack of volunteers has been a constant during my seven years as a NAMA officer. (I was the Executive Secretary for four years before becoming President). When we launched our zoom series, we received no responses to our call for presentation proposals. Many people have been nominated to be our next President, but none have accepted a nomination. We have dormant committees for lack of volunteers. And yet, the foray has sold out quickly; our presentations filled up quickly. In short, I can see that you want to be here; tell me what you willing to do to help us do more for our affiliated clubs and members.

As President, I had hoped to create more events. COVID made that goal more difficult, but so does the strain on the few volunteers we have. It would be wonderful to offer a regional foray or two each year in addition to the annual foray. Such a menu would provide options for people who live too far from the annual foray location or have a conflict with the date. It would allow us to find and voucher a larger variety of mushrooms. With the reach that forays give us, we could live up to our name by foraying and recruiting more members throughout NORTH AMERICA.

So I encourage you to be active. Put yourself forward to be a NAMA officer, nominate a member of your club, or one of the amazing people you meet here. Join a committee. Volunteer your club to host a foray. Share some ideas with another officer or me. Tell me what you want to do.

If this year can be compared to the mycelial flush of honey mushrooms, let's hope that the coming year is like morels after a forest fire. With more financial and organizational strength, we'll be smoking.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Ching

Barbara Ching, August 4, 2021

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT

by Bruch Reed, NAMA Chief Operating Officer

North American Mycological Association

Promoting, Pursuing, and Advancing Mycology

My annual report for fiscal year 2020 covers July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. It is my third annual report, as I formally assumed the role of NAMA Executive Secretary in January, 2019.

To say that 2020 was quite a year would be the understatement of the century; it will go down in most histories as an *annus horribilis* for many reasons; for me, chief among those was the necessary but very painful cancellation of our Missouri foray, most of the work on which had already been completed when we were forced to call it off by the Big C. Happily, that work will not be in vain, as we will descend upon the beautiful Ozarks in September of 2022!

In the absence of our signature Annual Foray event, NAMA leadership was forced to deep dive into our organizational identity. How do we promote, pursue and advance mycology without the big foray's focusing function? Answering this question ended up being a proverbial blessing in disguise. Instead of giving up and going on hiatus, I am proud to say we buckled down and accomplished quite a bit.

Both our journal *McIlvainea* (thanks to dynamo editor and NAMA Second Vice President Laura Juszczak) and our *Mycophile* newsletter came out on time, bursting at the spines with science, fellowship and visual delight. I am particularly proud that, in the midst of vast social upheaval, NAMA leapt into the national conversation with the cover of our September-October *Mycophile*, featuring a *Boletus sensibilis* with the words "Black Lives Matter" deftly inscribed into its cyanescing pores. I had a vague conception of this image in my mind but all the credit for its beautiful, indelible realization goes to *Mycophile* editor Karen Monger and her husband, Robert Gergulics, whose paired artistic abilities elevated both my idea and the accompanying story about how NAMA's clubs are rising to the challenge of increasing the diversity of our mycocommunity.

Response to the newsletter issue was overwhelmingly positive but it also led to conflict that resulted in the departures both of our first vice president and our membership secretary, the latter of whose duties I absorbed from August 2020 through February, 2021, when a new membership secretary came aboard; he resigned in June 2021 and I have assumed those duties again until we find the right person for the role whose enthusiasm for NAMA and our members will enable her/him/them stay the course long enough to make a positive impact. In addition to being trustworthy keeping confidential personal membership data, an ideal candidate will see

each member as an individual, maintain a tone of friendly professionalism in correspondence, treat each query or request as the highest priority, take every email and call as an opportunity to engage warmly and personally as a building block of fellowship and the future human edifice of NAMA itself. If this sounds like you, please contact Second Vice President Laura Juszczak (laurajust54@gmail.com), who has stepped up phenomenally to take on the duties of Nominating Committee Chair.

During my time blending the roles of Executive Secretary and Membership Secretary, I learned a great deal more than I had previously dreamt of knowing about our website, database, and billing systems. I must thank Jane Onorati, former NAMA Webmaster, both for figuring out and then for patiently teaching me what I needed to know in order to use our system more effectively. A new website is sorely needed but until we get one, we must maximize our use of the site and system we have; thanks to Jane, I feel I can do that.

NAMA Treasurer Melodie Gates, Jane and I worked near daily from October through February to bring NAMA membership dues (and membership rolls) into current status. Club dues, in particular, had in too many cases gone into years of arrears due to various miscommunications and system issues. When we started, over 50% of our clubs were behind. I am happy to say that as of this writing, 98% of our affiliated clubs are current on their dues. The effort to bring them current involved close teamwork with Melodie and Jane; it could not have been accomplished without them. Total dues collected from October through January amounted to over $24,000.

Despite the absence of a dedicated membership secretary, NAMA saw tremendous membership growth over the past year. It seems obvious to many of us that mushrooms are having their moment and more people than ever before are very interested in learning all they can. NAMA, both through our organization and affiliated clubs, provides a veritable mycelial network of resources for learning; membership increases reflect those numbers.

Membership growth during the past year is approximately as follows:

August, 2020: 1,020 active members

August, 2021: 1,383 active members (increase of 35%).

Please let this sink in: during a period in which we canceled our main event and membership driver, and lost two membership secretaries, membership increased THIRTY-FIVE PERCENT.

I believe we can do even better, through our aforementioned rising social media presence and increased club engagement.

We did "lose" a few clubs during this time, insofar as our dues-collection efforts revealed a few clubs that were either defunct or not operating.

We currently have 92 active clubs, with 4 more in the conceptualization pipeline.

NAMA Treasurer Melodie Gates conceived of and pushed for NAMA to organize the virtual presentation series. The result was a spectacularly popular and successful series of Zoom lectures that have totaled thousands of discrete views. I acted as event registrar and sometimes host, thanks again to Jane Onorati's tutorials on our website's Events Module. The events were often a bit of a scramble to organize and manage and I could not be prouder of having been a part of realizing Melodie's vision; we plan to continue these virtual events this fall.

Our required 2020 Annual Report with our incorporating State of Ohio Secretary of State's office was filed on time.

I calculate that in FY 2020 I spent between 1,800 and 2,000 hours working for NAMA in various capacities. It seems ridiculous but I just ran a conservative count of my NAMA-related emails and -- NOT counting multiple responses and threaded conversations -- they total over 9,000 discrete emails for FY 2020. I do not keep count of hours on the phone or Zoom but I think it's fair to say that, at this point, the position of NAMA Executive Secretary has become a full-time job.

I am looking to do more.

This year, I have joined the *Joan Garry Nonprofit Leadership Lab*, which is dedicated to helping nonprofits like NAMA develop leadership and management skills. I joined in July and am excited by what I have learned so far. Many of my goals below have already been informed by what I'm learning in this workshop. Those interested can find more information here: https://nonprofitleadershiplab.com/.

Once the CONAMA 2021 Annual Foray is over, I plan to hit the ground running to initiate and/or move further toward accomplishing the following goals:

- Procure and see through an independent audit of NAMA's financials. I want to be clear in stating that in no way do I believe there are or will be any irregularities discovered; rather, such an audit is both mandated in our policy manual and a "clean," current audit is the only way I can accomplish my second goal, which is as follows:
- Once we have a clean audit, I plan to use the organizational blessing it confers to go after grant money. NAMA is a 62-year-old venerable 501(c)3 organization and we rely too heavily on membership dues for operating expenses. We should have been pursuing grants all along for our various initiatives, including our Voucher Collection Project, toxicology research, education and NAMA's general operating expenses. Grant making organizations universally demand that a "clean," recent audit be included as part of the application and it is also mandated in our policy manual.
- Further pursue a blanket liability insurance policy that covers our events and into which our clubs can buy at

a rate lower than what each club is individually now paying. I think there has to be an insurance vendor who will work with us.

- Keep club and membership dues/membership rolls up to date.
- I support NAMA President Barbara Ching's initiative to restructure NAMA-affiliated club dues with one flat rate. Additionally, I support NAMA Treasurer Melodie Gates' call for making one or more autopay modes available to clubs.
- Keep membership rolls growing; I believe this can be accomplished through deeper engagement with our affiliated clubs, through our burgeoning social media presence (newly expanded, to great and tangible effect, by Marketing Chair Kathy Yerich, Marketing Committee members Rose Tursi and Adam Cohen, and Past President David Rust).
- Get to 100 NAMA-affiliated clubs and beyond; we currently have 92 clubs on our rolls, with four more on the horizon. There are still vast areas of the continent, as well as within individual provinces or states, in which the nearest mushroom club activities are inaccessible to vast numbers of residents due to being several or many hours' drive away.
- Work toward professionalizing NAMA staff, both core staff and foray speakers, Voucher folks; I think our mission is simply too big to rely so heavily on volunteers. I see NAMA as The Audubon Society of Mushrooms and it's time to claim a comparable position among the bioscience-based nonprofits. The current workload on too few volunteers is unsustainable and risks NAMA's survival, let alone its mission.
- Regarding foray speakers: I want to see an outright scramble among all North American mycologists to participate in our events due both to our stature and to our rate of compensation, which we have already elevated within the past two years from $100 plus room and board to $250 plus room and board; doubling the honorarium and adding a travel stipend is my stated goal. I believe this would only benefit NAMA and our mission to promote mycology, which has been downgraded as a discipline in our university system. Younger mycologists in particular need and deserve this kind of financial support from us as teaching positions continue to dwindle, phase out, and pay less.
- Commit to producing Regional Forays, as mandated by our policy manual. We have not consistently held Regional Forays since before I became a NAMA member (2015). I want to see NAMA elevating our continental presence by partnering with local clubs in a profit-sharing model, skewed toward benefiting the host club(s), while cultivating new NAMA leadership and increasing NAMA membership, by holding at least three Regional Forays per calendar year of 25 to 50 participants. Toward this end, I hope to be part of an expansion/reorganization of our Foray Committee, in which the Foray Chair focuses on our Annual Foray while guiding and mentoring one or more Vice Chairs, each of whom, in close conjunction with host club(s), develops and oversees a Regional Foray.
- Encouraging NAMA-affiliated clubs to fundraise foray scholarships in the manner of Minnesota Mycological Society, which has generously sent two of its members to CONAMA 2021. Expanding this practice among our clubs will be energizing both to the clubs and to their relationships with NAMA.
- NAMA should have a strong voice in terms of environmental advocacy, fighting for and protecting mushroom-foraging rights. It is also long past time that NAMA take a stand on the medical research into, possession, cultivation and use of psychoactive mushrooms. Whatever our individual opinions may be, it is a fact that North America annually produces abundant wild fruitings of psychoactive mushroom species, which are ecosystemically and culturally significant and as much a part of our fungal birthright as hens and morels. The scientific data on their medicinal benefits becomes clearer by the day and movements toward decriminalization/legalization now number in the hundreds. To paraphrase Howard Zinn, NAMA cannot stay neutral on this fast-moving train. Along with what's edible and what's toxic, interest in psychoactive mushrooms is one of the main areas of energy drawing people toward mycology and it is in NAMA's interests to join that momentous discussion. I realize that not everyone will share my opinion and that the discussion on this topic may be fraught but I strongly feel that we cannot continue tacitly to remain aloof from the mycological elephant in the room. I furthermore believe that our relative silence on this issue negatively affects our ability to attract and retain younger members.

Here at the end of my first full term as Executive Secretary, I believe in and am more committed to NAMA than ever. The goals I outline above will hardly be a cinch to achieve but I look forward to pursuing them while serving NAMA and honoring its mission. I thank everyone involved in the organization for the continued opportunity to serve. Special gratitude the members who daily edify me with their incisive questions, valuable feedback and ideas, to Executive Board members Melodie Gates, Laura Juszczak and Howard Goltz for their inspiration and steady support, and to outgoing NAMA President Barbara Ching for her patient, inspired mentorship. I look forward to using what she has gently taught me to support our next president as well as to cultivate other new NAMA leaders.

2021 CONAMA FORAY REPORT

(*or* There are King Boletes in Those Mountains!)

by Karen Monger, *Mycophile* Editor

We heard the rumors online for weeks about abundant fruitings of Colorado king boletes (*Boletus rubriceps*), hawk's wings (*Sarcodon imbricatus*), and storybook-perfect *Amanita muscaria var. flavivolvata*. We watched the weather reports and planned driving routes. We finally decided to take the larger luggage piece to fit in the Excalibur dehydrator and plenty of plastic baggies. After a long year's hiatus, the annual NAMA foray was back for 2021. Our registration had been completed!

Lactarius deterrimus

At 8,700 feet elevation, Snow Mountain Ranch in Granby, Colorado, provided our lodging, dining, and foray activity spaces for classes, the fungi collection and display, evening programs, vending, and social events.

Local, NAMA-affiliated clubs the Colorado Mycological Society and the Pike's Peak Mycological Society handled

Sarcodon imbricatus

logistics and planning. Jay Berger of the Colorado Mycological Society selected the foray sites.

A Thursday early-bird half-day bus foray was organized at the Winter Park Ski Area. Fearless and cheerful participants rode the gondola to the top of Winter Park for a higher elevation foray location. We did not partake in this activity ourselves. Still, we did see the participants returning

photo credit Barbara Ching

from the excursion with smiling faces and baskets full of fungi, and did hear a few tales of their adventures (and misadventures!)

Hygrophorus pudorinus

After check-in, we familiarized ourselves with the grounds, encountered a short hailstorm, had dinner at the Schlessman Commons dining hall, visited the vendors set up in the main hallway, and viewed the incredible paintings by Dr. Theresa Kenney on display in the main lecture room. Participants settled in for the event opening announcements and the evening program by Ed Lubow that familiarized us with the local ecosystem and fungi we could expect to encounter. It was off to bed early for us, missing the evening social. Our Friday morning foray was at the First Creek location. We were forced up slopes we don't normally encounter in the Northeast, and we were rewarded by multitudes of amazing mushrooms nested among the wet mosses, decayed logs, and spruce needles. *Cortinarius* were the most abundant, but soon after collecting initial specimens for the foray table, we passed by large groups of hawk's wings, *Hygrophorus pudorinus*, *Tricholoma focale*, *Lactarius deterrimus*, and *Albatrellopsis confluens*; all species new to us. Our goal was the king bolete, and we were not disappointed! Specimens ranged from barely-emerged buttons to platter-sized monsters that could double as a

Tricholoma focale

Boletus rubriceps

personal umbrella. I overheard the walk leader telling some forayers that mushrooms were so abundant at this location in the past few weeks that they had to *stop* because they had so many king boletes already.

Friday afternoon my teen-aged daughter and I took a crafting workshop with Rose Tursi: Build Your Own Tiny Mushroom Terrarium. We learned how to collect and dry specimens of small fungi, moss, and other bits of nature to

Flammulina populicola

prepare them for the craft, and thankfully Rose had some specimens ready to go. We chose our tiny terrariums and their contents, and Rose instructed us all on how to arrange them artfully and then how to finish the process with the provided glue. We had so much fun with this craft that we purchased additional kits from Rose's vendor table to partake in the craft once we returned home.

Robert, my husband (and a skilled photographer), stayed behind in the display room to photograph specimens and the Microscopy class. The mushrooms from each walk get placed in paper boats that look like fast food french fry dishes, but these boats include a descriptive tag that records information about the mushroom (such as location, habitat, date, and a unique specimen number) for the identifiers and recorders to use to document what foray attendees found. Robert selected some of the most striking collections to photograph, like the poplar velvet foot, *Flammulina populicola*. Robert also photographed the microscopy class with Chief Mycologist Amy Honan and Ed Lubow. The microscopes were supplied by NAMA Voucher Collection Project Chair Dr. Andy Wilson, who is curator of the Fungarium at Denver Botanic Garden, and CU Denver. Ed and Amy first determined the extent of the participants' experience level with the microscopes. With the generous assistance of Dr. Roy Halling, they helped the participants make slides using the crush mount method and viewed the results of their handiwork. Participants also learned to use stains to help bring out important features of spores in the slides.

We were busy in the woods and crafting on Friday, so we did not attend any classes. The selections were varied: Alisha Quandt's class "Diversity and Host Transitions in *Cordyceps*-like Fungi," Dr. Sara Branco's class "Evolution of Heavy Metal Tolerance in *Suillus*," and Heather Hallen-Adams' class "Amatoxins: Why and How?"

Leccinum insigne

After Friday dinner, we all went back to Indian Peaks for further browsing through the vendor tables and the evening program by Trent Blizzard about hunting the wildfire burns for morels. Morels are obviously a favorite, and Trent gave hints and tips about when to hunt and the right places to find morels after a forest fire. This is not a phenomenon we experience in the east, so it was interesting to learn about

the importance of elevation and timing when hunting these pyrophilous fungi.

Looking for more specimens to fill our dehydrator, we headed out on Saturday morning to the Berthoud Pass for a quick hunt through open meadows and spruce/fir forests. We didn't stay too long, and drove to the Meadow Creek Reservoir afterwards before heading back to camp and

Douglas-fir
Pseudotsuga menziesii
Description
Bark: Gray and smooth with resin blisters on young trees; red-brown, very thick and deeply furrowed with broad, often corky ridges at maturity.
Leaves: Evergreen needles are ½ to 1½ inches long with bracts at the base.
Fruit: Light brown, short-stalked cones that hang down from the branches; 1½ to 3 inches long; many thin, rounded cone scales on top of a long, 3-pointed, winged seed that sticks out beyond scales.
Elevation: 6,000 to 9,500 feet.
Height: 100 to 130 feet.
Habitat: Rocky soils of moist northern slopes; in pure stands and mixed coniferous forests.
Relation to Fire: Thin, resinous bark of young trees makes them highly susceptible to fire; after 40 years, trees have developed a very thick layer of bark to protect them during hot ground and surface fires.
Douglas-fir
Engelmann Spruce
Lodgepole Pine

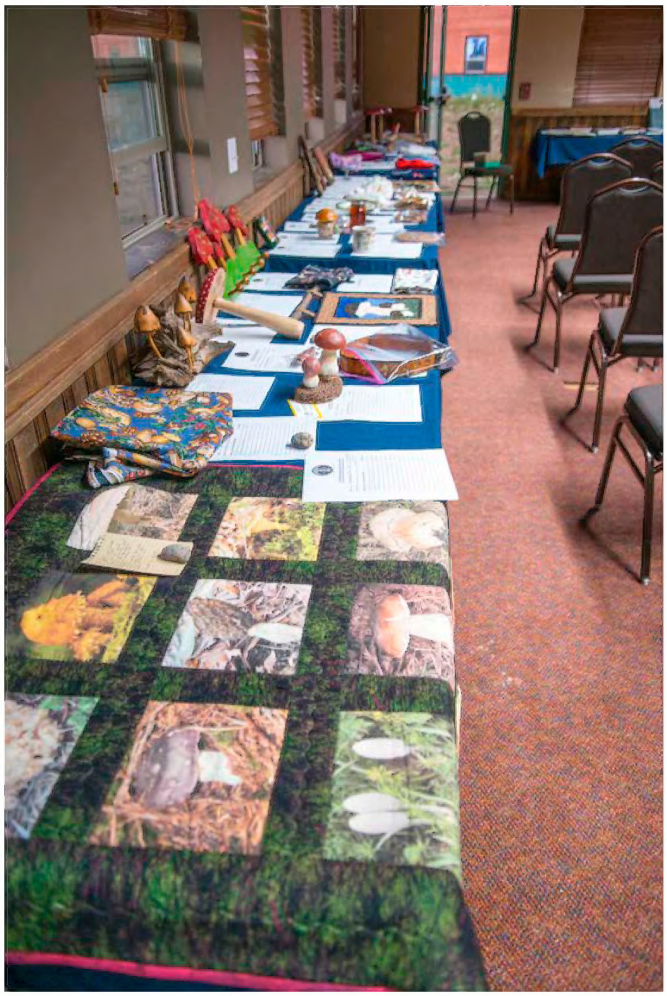
dropping off the morning's finds in the display room. We felt a little tired and affected by the altitude after lunch, so we decided to stick around the YMCA grounds where Robert hiked around the Gaylord Reservoir and photographed some of the many fruitings of *Leccinum insigne* he found among the aspen groves. Coming from the east coast, we had to learn a whole new forest of tree species for the Rocky Mountain region: Douglas fir, Colorado blue spruce, lodgepole pine, and quaking aspen, among others. We were grateful for the wallet-sized flashcards of the local tree varieties provided by Mike Essam of Manitou Springs, Colorado.

There was an *al fresco* mycophagy session with Trent Blizzard and Graham Steinruck on Saturday afternoon using freeze-dried mushrooms, and I heard rave reviews from the lucky participants afterward. Lectures presented on Saturday included Else Vellinga and Sigrid Jakob's presentation on "FunDiS-Fungal Diversity Survey Updates," Alissa Allen's workshop "Drop By and Dye," and NAMA Memorial Fellowship winner Carolina Piña Páez's class "Conifer Islands in the Sky: The Impact of Isolation in *Rhizopogon* Communities."

John Lamprecht and Melodie Gates, photo credit Bruch Reed

Saturday evening's program celebrated our members. The Harry and Elsie Knighton Service Award was presented to NAMA Treasurer Melodie Gates to honor the many contributions she has made to her club, South Sound Mushroom Club. The Gary Lincoff Contributions to Amateur Mycology Award was presented to the editor of FUNGI Magazine, Britt Bunyard. President Barbara Ching selected two winners of the President's Choice Outstanding Service Award: NAMA Secretary Howard Goltz and foray

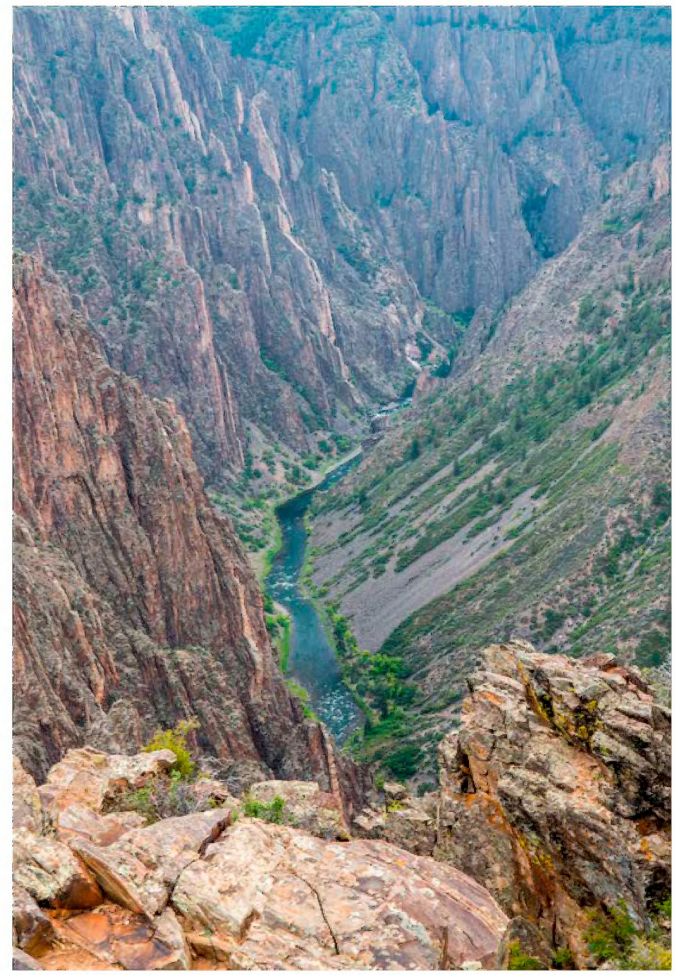
Barbara Ching and Howard Goltz, photo credit Bruch Reed



committee member and Colorado Mycological Society President John Sommer. Arts Committee Chair Rose Tursi presented a stunning slideshow of the Visual Arts Contest submission, with special emphasis on the winning entries. (These winning artists will be featured in an upcoming issue of *The Mycophile*.) Chief Mycologist Amy Honan delivered the Saturday evening lecture, "The State of Fungi in Colorado," about the effects climate change has on fungi in the region. Saturday evening was also the conclusion of the silent auction, and I hope many people were overjoyed with their newly-won mushroom swag.

The final day of the foray, Sunday, featured a final collection walk-through. My family considered the 2021 NAMA Foray a success with the variety of activities offered, the incredible specimens collected for the display tables, and the local scenery and foray locations. One suggestion for future forays: a camp kitchen set up for long-distance travelers! We would have loved to sample some edibles we found, but we had no way to cook them.

P.S. Colorado was a new travel destination for my husband, daughter, and me, so we were determined to make the most of the trip. We spent five additional days exploring the landscapes of Arapahoe Basin, Iron Mountain Hot Springs, Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Grand Mesa National Forest (Holy *Boletus rubriceps*! We had the dehydrator working overtime after this day trip!), and the funky Cottonwood Hot Springs near Buena Vista.



Black Canyon of Gunnison National Park

BLUE RIDGE MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY JOINS COALITION TO FIGHT RACIST VANDALISM IN GEORGE WASHINGTON NATIONAL FOREST

by Bruch Reed, NAMA Chief Operating Officer

Pat Mitchell

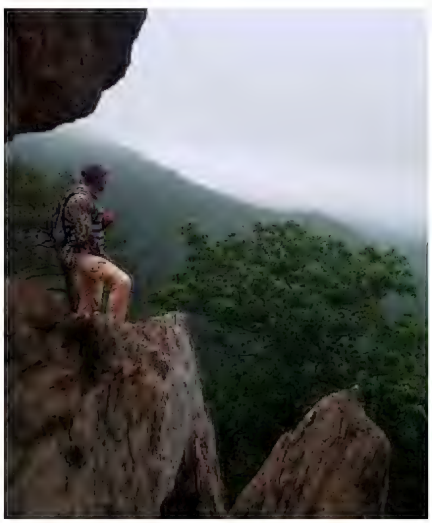
On a warm spring night toward the end of Virginia's 2021 morel season, Blue Ridge Mycological Society (BRMS) President Pat Mitchell, was stunned by what he heard when a fellow mushroom enthusiast pulled him aside at a social gathering to describe what he had found in one of their favorite honeyholes in the George Washington National Forest: beneath a highway bridge in fresh, blood-red spraypaint, sprawled thirty feet of violent racist hate speech.

Even after the friend, who wishes to remain anonymous for this story, shared photos of the site, Mitchell could not reconcile his experience of leading BRMS club forays at the location with the visuals now assaulting him. "I go there all the time. I take my kids there. I have African-American friends who do the same. I had never seen anything like this," Mitchell says, still upset weeks later.

Mitchell's friend returned to the site over Father's Day weekend with a foam roller to paint over the offensive epithets and hoped that would be the end of the matter. Unfortunately, one week later he again visited the tract and was confronted by fresh vulgarity, this time carved deeply into the bark of an old-growth sycamore tree. The vandal(s) had not only attacked the tree's bark with blades but also appear to have employed a blowtorch in order to make their vicious message stand out more starkly and permanently.

"I immediately felt this new attack was a direct taunt to nature people like me, which the racists figured we would be reluctant to cut down an ancient tree. But I knew we had to do something. Thinking about my Black friends coming across these images with their children..." Mitchell trails off.

Mitchell contacted one such friend, fellow BRMS and NAMA member Dave McRae[1], another mushroom-hunter who frequents the area, to alert him to the incident. McRae thanked Mitchell and shared that the knowledge would irrevocably change how he interacted with the woods, that he would constantly be wondering of every white person he saw, is that the guy who did this? Is everybody who's white and here in on this?



Jared McRae

McRae asked Mitchell if anyone had reported the crime to authorities; Mitchell replied that they had not. Mitchell explains, "I felt uncomfortable being the one to report it. But Dave kind of took me to task, saying that it's too easy for white people to pretend we never saw [the hate speech]. A lot of times people want to be allies but when put to the test, they disappear. As an ally, Dave asked me to reconsider and do whatever it took to make a record of this crap so that if it happens again, or escalates, there's a paper trail and more motivation for authorities to act."

"He really schooled me," says Mitchell. "And I couldn't appreciate the lesson more."

Mitchell set to work, forming a coalition with Hunters of Color (HOC), represented by Lydia Parker. Together, they filed a police report and Ms. Parker took the lead in drafting

a letter, sent to USFS on August 23 and excerpted below, with their concerns and requests:

"In light of recent revelations of a vulgar racial epithet present in the Glenwood-Pedlar District of the George Washington National Forest, Hunters of Color, along with the Blue Ridge Mycological Society, would implore that the U.S. Forest Service in charge of this district take direct action.

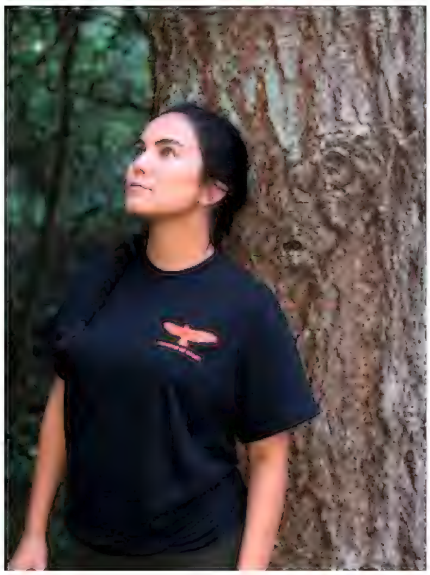
"Firstly, HOC *et al.* request that the U.S. Forest Service remove the racial epithet from the tree in question. At the behest of BRMS, we ask that damage be minimal to the tree and, if possible, that the tree remain standing.

"Secondly, whether the tree must be removed or if it can remain standing with scars on its bark, we ask that the U.S. Forest Service place a plaque or sign to explain the importance of its removal, or the reason for the scarring. HOC has drafted suggested wording for the plaque further on in this document. Should funding for this project amount to a barrier, Hunters of Color will raise funds and pay for the installation of the plaque.

"Third, we ask that the U.S. Forest Service, or at minimum this particular district, make a statement similar to the sentiments to be memorialized on the physical plaque, reinforcing that our National Forests are public land, set aside for the enjoyment and recreation of all citizens. For help with this statement, we suggest working with HOC. We would also ask that this statement include a direct denunciation of white supremacy/racism in all of its forms.

"Lastly, we would ask that the U.S. Forest Service and the Glenwood-Pedlar district implement a ranger or LEO to patrol the grounds (potentially in plain clothes), or a camera of some sort to catch the person responsible for this repulsive act of vandalism and racism. Again, if cost is prohibitive, Hunters of Color will donate a cellular camera if necessary.

"It is our unanimous understanding that until the U.S. Forest Service acts to ensure that the George Washington National Forest, and all National Forests, are free of racism, Black and Brown Americans will not be free to enjoy and recreate at the same rate as our non-POC counterparts. We believe that it is imperative that the U.S. Forest Service act in accordance with its very own motto of 'Caring for the Land and Serving People.' *All* people.



Lydia Parker

"Plaque/Sign Suggestion If the Tree Remains Standing[2]:

Hate Has No Home on Public Land. The scars on this tree represent scars that run deep upon these lands: the divisive and detrimental effects of racism and white supremacy. We recognize that this tree, on James River Monacan tribal land, is also on land set aside and held in trust by the U.S. Government for the use and enjoyment of all Americans: Public Land. It is for this reason that the U.S. Forest Service, along with representatives from the Blue Ridge Mycological Society, Hunters of Color, and citizens of Virginia, commemorate this tree as an example of the measures we will take to ensure that these public lands remain equitable, inviting, and accessible to all. Together, we stand against the lie of white supremacy, and admonish anyone who would try to promulgate this lie by vandalizing public land: you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. For those who would propagate racism on this land, be warned: we are united against hate, and your hatred has no home here. The Outdoors Are For Everyone.

"Any variation of these statements will be acceptable. However, we expect that the U.S. Forest Service...will, at minimum, denounce racism and white supremacy while explicitly stating your commitment to caring for the land and serving all people. We would also ask that the U.S. Forest Service have these statements proofread and verified by the other organizations and parties involved before creating a sign or plaque."

Response from the USFS was commendably swift; the coalition received a reply to their email within six hours from Lauren Stull, USFS District Manager stating, in part, "I share your disgust with this situation and will work to quickly remove this from public lands." As of this writing, it is our understanding that USFS has sent officers to the site and is still investigating. If anyone has information to share about this incident, please contact Ms. Stull via the following contact information.
Lauren.Stull@usda.gov, 540-291-2188

NAMA is proud to stand with our affiliated club, Blue Ridge Mycological Society, as well with its coalition partner Hunters of Color, in this unfortunate but necessary battle and we will bring our membership updates as this story continues to unfold. We reiterate and amplify Ms. Parker's poignant, incisive declaration: "The Outdoors Are For Everyone."

[1]Mr. McRae is quoted in our September-October 2020 *Mycophile* story on NAMA clubs' efforts to build more diverse membership, at which time he noted, "There are cultural handcuffs on the Black community when it comes to spending time in nature. When the National Park Service was founded, Black Americans were not welcome or safe to visit wild lands; there's this urban-legend-y undercurrent notion that bad guys who don't like us are waiting in the woods."

[2]The HOC/BRMS coalition drafted alternate suggested plaque language in the event that the tree cannot be saved.

NAMA AWARDS AND NOMINEES

2021 GARY LINCOFF AWARD
FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMATEUR MYCOLOGY

NAMA has a long tradition of honoring those who make exceptional contributions to mycology, both at the local level and within the larger mycological community. One such award has been bestowed for at least the past 60 years: the Award for Contributions to Amateur Mycology recognizes someone who has made exceptional contributions to amateur mycology in general.

In 2015, this award was renamed the "Gary Lincoff Award for Contributions to Amateur Mycology" to honor in perpetuity Gary's contributions and give further measure to the honor of this award. Only past recipients are eligible to select the newest winner from those nominated and 15 past winners assisted with the voting this year, which makes selection an even more prestigious honor. I encourage everyone to view the list of previous winners, criteria and process on our NAMA website.

This year, we had 5 tremendously worthy nominees. The 2021 Gary Lincoff Award for Contributions to Amateur Mycology goes to an author, foray organizer, expert identifier, educator, foray leader, guide, founder and editor-in-chief of FUNGI Magazine, an international publication, international foray host, to name a few of his accomplishments; the 2021 selectee is Dr. Britt A. Bunyard. He was present to receive the award at the CONAMA foray and was genuinely surprised. As part of his award, he now is a lifetime member of NAMA. Please join in congratulating him.

John Lamprecht, Minnesota Mycological Society, Past-President and Membership Coordinator

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JESSIKA GAUVIN
BOREAL TRUSTEE NOMINEE

A lifelong forager, some of my first memories are of picking mushrooms with my mom.

I focused mostly on plants and herbs until a few years ago when I got sucked back into the fungal world.

I now own a foraging business and teach people to forage, as well as helping to run the Emergency Poison ID group, identifying plants and mushrooms in emergency situations.

DAVE LAYTON NEW FIRST VICE PRESIDENT, NAMA

I've been hunting wild mushrooms mainly as a pot hunter for over 47 years. As a young man I had an erratic income as a musician and temporary laborer. I knew about morels but learned about oyster mushrooms when I found those instead of morels. They made a few good meals. I went to the local library and checked out several mushroom books hoping to find out what were these big floppy mushrooms growing on a log. Not only did I learn that oyster mushrooms are delicious, I learned that there was a colorful and exotic world of fungi waiting for my discovery. Soon fungi became a major part of my diet, and it still is, but I like to think that today I'm a little more discerning. I don't want to admit how much *Coprinus quadrifidus* I actually ate in those days. The library realized their mushroom books were being constantly checked out so they expanded the collection. I thought I hit the jackpot when they brought in Arora's *Mushrooms Demystified*. Now that book and dozens more grace my home bookshelves.

My joy of learning about mushrooms expanded when I joined the Prairie States Mushroom Club in 2001. There I met some real mushroom experts such as Drs. Lois Tiffany and Don Huffman, also Dean Able. I've been past President of that club and will continue as Editor of its newsletter *Symbiosis* when club members provide enough material. My numerous presentations have included two wild mushroom cooking classes at New Pioneer Food Coop in Coralville, several master gardener and horticulture conferences, a DNR Naturalist conference and the Outlander Conference, where I discussed the use of mushrooms for food, medicine and poison in 18th century Scotland. I enjoy writing about mushrooms even more than talking about them and have had a couple articles printed in McIlvania.

The COVID pandemic enlightened me to the term "critical mass" in the spread of virus. It reminded me that like virus particles, mushroom spores don't really "fly" and they are also more likely to propagate if they reach a critical mass in a receptive environment. I now understand that sustainable harvesting can require more than leaving a few caps standing or storing in a breathable basket. Likewise if a solitary mushroom is taken for a mushroom foray and left on a table, that species' reproductive capabilities in that habitat may have been eliminated, plus vital info about it is probably missing. Fortunately with modern technology such as iNaturalist and genetic sampling, critical information can be documented easily and a small piece of mushroom tissue can be taken for further ID without harming the mushroom's reproductive capability. I'd like this position to be an avenue to work with mushroom clubs to use more careful and advanced collection methods, creating an awareness that actually benefits the fungi being studied. I'm also fascinated by fungal interactions and competition. Several years ago my beloved and abundant blewits disappeared in a certain woods. I was dismayed until they were replaced by far superior *Clitopilus prunulus* in 2018. Imagine, I knew very little about my now favorite fungi until 3 years ago. Why did one replace the other? What else might still be out there for me if I can just live long enough?

Once I finally went to college at age 40, I became a Retired and Senior Volunteer Program director in the Quad Cities. With that job I became Chair of a volunteerism conference and served on the board of several organizations, including President of the Illinois RSVP Directors Association and the BiState Literacy Council. Currently I serve on the Boards of two local nonprofits and I serve as a commissioner for Volunteer Iowa (the Governor's Commission on Volunteer Service). This position and one of my board positions will be ending in the next year, making me feel I can be successful as 1st Vice President of NAMA. Thank you for considering me for this role.

MEDIA REVIEWS FOR *THE MYCOPHILE*

An important role of The Mycophile is to provide NAMA members with reviews of books, DVD's, apps, software programs, and the like. If you learn of a new book (or DVD or whatever) that you feel would be of interest to other NAMA members, or if you would like to write a review, please contact the Book Review Editor, Steve Trudell, (mycecol@uw.edu) so that he can arrange acquisition of the items and coordinate submission of reviews to the newsletter.

TRENT BLIZZARD NAMA PRESIDENT NOMINEE

Trent Blizzard has lived in the East, West and Midwest. He earned a BA from Kenyon College and an MA in Political Philosophy from Fordham University and taught high school in New Jersey in the 90s. For the next 20 years to the present day, Trent ran his own website design and marketing business. Eventually settling in Colorado, the Rocky Mountains provided the landscape for his love with Kingdom Fungi and specifically, burn morels. Trent and Kristen's travels around the West in search of fungi led them to create ModernForager.com, where they share their knowledge and adventures. Trent has been involved with the Colorado Mycological Society, where he was VP. He and his wife Kristen just recently moved to Cable, Wisconsin. They are authors of "Wild Mushrooms - A Cookbook and Foraging Guide" and also self-published "Burn Morels".

RACHEL SWENIE 2021 NAMA FELLOWSHIP AWARD

The NAMA Memorial Fellowship, funded by our endowment and administered through Mycological Society of America (MSA), is awarded annually to promising graduate students in mycology. The fellowship is intended as a supplementary grant and may be used by the recipient in any way to further graduate studies. This year, the scholarship fondly honors the force that was and ever shall be Pat Lewis, whose many years of dedicated service to NAMA include capably chairing our Finance Committee as well as development and stewardship of our endowment fund. The 2021 award of $2,000 goes to Rachel Swenie.

Swenie hails from Chicago, Illinois and is a PhD Candidate in the Matheny Lab of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at University of Tennessee in Knoxville; her BFA, from Columbia College, Chicago, is in Photography. Asked about how she came to pursue mycology, she reminisces that "I have no memories of fungi from childhood other than enjoying eating mushrooms on pizza or in a salad. My family was not very outdoorsy and I can't recall ever noticing so much as a mushroom outside. My interest in fungi was spurred much later, as an adult, when I was volunteering at an old building called The Plant, a former meat-packing plant that was being rehabbed into a vertical farm with plants and fish grown indoors. Someone suggested the idea of mushroom farming, and I was fascinated by the idea. I had no idea what the lifecycle of a mushroom was like, let alone how to grow them, but I dedicated myself to reading and learning all I could about mushroom cultivation. I ended up building and running a gourmet mushroom farm at the Plant. I was invited to speak to the Illinois Mycological Association and ended up going to several of their forays, where I learned more about identifying wild mushrooms. I had gone back to school to study biology and eventually landed in the Matheny Lab at the University of Tennessee, where I fell in love with fungal systematics and field mycology."

Swenie's past work includes revision of pyrophilous *Pholiota* and she is currently excited about how her work partners with citizen scientists, including members of NAMA and our affiliated clubs.

"One really cool, unique aspect of mycology is the important contributions non-professionals have made to mycological research. I've incorporated a lot of specimens collected by various mushroom club members into my research into species diversity within the order Cantharellales. Members of the Cantharellales include edible mushrooms such as hedgehog and chanterelle mushrooms, as well as corals, crusts, plant pathogens, and orchid associates. Despite the many well-known species in this order, there is still much that is unknown about broader relationships among genera and why some groups are more species-rich than others. I'm building a large phylogeny of the Cantharellales better to understand species relationships and to test whether changes in morphology and/or ecology contribute to species diversification in the order. I hope to continue doing research that allows me to work with fungi in the field and lab, as well as interface with non-academic mycology through both local mushroom clubs and NAMA."

Congratulations to the future Dr. Swenie and we look forward with hope to her presenting at one of our annual forays!

by Bruch Reed, NAMA Chief Operating Officer

SISTER MARIE
MYCOLOGIST

The Alcona Conservation District teams up twice a year with its Iosco County counterpart to host a mushroom hunt every spring and fall at the Ingalls Forest near Tawas.

Last spring's event … well, you know what happened. But last fall's hunt went ahead, attracting 70 masked amateur mycologists, who plucked 55 species in 90 minutes.

It was great fun, and I learned a ton, so I determined to return for the spring hunt on Saturday, May 22, 2021.

Some background: Mycology is the study of fungus. The first writings on the subject were the work of the Greek author Euripedes (480-406 B.C.), better known for his tragedies, Medea and Electra. Carl Linnaeus, who assigned Latin names to all the known plants and animals in the 1700s, placed fungi into the Plant Kingdom, with genus labels like Boletus (the deadliest). The father of the field is Christiaan Hendrik Persoon, a South African naturalist who published the seminal work in mycology, Synopsis Methodica Fungorum (Methodological Synopsis of Fungi) in 1801. Persoon is credited with coining the maxim, "Be sure of your 'shroom, before you consume."

In recent decades, advanced research has shown that, in evolutionary terms, mushrooms are actually more closely related to species in the Animal Kingdom. But let's not go there. Vegetarians already have a limited menu.

After a dry spell that discouraged the emergence of morels where I live, it rained overnight, and I found the first (as in, one) of the season outside the house, just before leaving for the mushroom hunt. Surely, a good omen, I thought…

But the clammy, cloudy day resulted in a small turnout, just five folks, not counting the pros, of whom there were four.

The star of the mushroom hunts is Sister Marie Kopin, the sole surviving nun of the Order of the Sisters of the Precious Blood convent in Mount Pleasant, and a mushroom specialist from the Michigan Mushroom Hunter's Club. She learned mycology from her father, who passed on his father's and his grandmother's expertise to her when she was little, wandering the woods of Genessee County in the Thumb.

Think of a nun. What picture does your mind produce? A lady wearing a black dress and black veil? The only black Sister Marie wore were tall rubber boots, like hard-bitten commercial fishermen wear. The rest of her outfit was dungarees, white cardigan, and beige hat. The nun you imagined was probably standing straight, her hands clasped. Not Sister Marie, whose posture was more like a hard-bitten commercial fisherman than a demure Mother Superior.

If Maria from "The Sound of Music" had never met the dashing Herr Von Trapp, and stayed in the convent, she might have turned out like Sister Marie, wandering alpine meadows identifying breeds of Edelweiss, instead of tromping northern Michigan woods differentiating between fungi.

Sister Marie introduced her sidekick as "Heather the Hunt Leader." That's a serious designation. You can't just read "The Audubon Guide to Mushrooms" and declare yourself qualified to take others on a mushroom hunt. You must be certified by the State of Michigan, by taking a course, then scoring at least 80% on an exam. The same certification, along with a $200 fee, is required to sell wild mushrooms.

Sister Marie told us many fascinating tidbits about mushrooms. She mentioned "Mycopia Mushrooms" near Ludington, which grows mushrooms in an old factory.

She said a mycologist friend wove her hat with fibers dyed from mushrooms. It was a cloche, popular with flappers — Clara Bow wore one. It made Marie resemble a mushroom. (If people start to resemble their dogs, and mycologists mushrooms, that explains my fossil-like complexion.)

Sister Marie reminded me of a wise woman I met in Belize, who took me on a walk in the jungle, pointing out many useful plants, drawing on knowledge passed down from her ancient Mayan ancestors, who gathered the same herbs, vines, and fungi.

There is no Catholic patron saint of mushrooms. I can imagine Sister Marie being canonized one day and taking the title, after being credited with mushroom-related miracles!

Sister Marie did not mention the topic of "magic mushrooms," which also emerge this time of year. On that note, it is time for the State of Michigan to follow the progressive lead of the City of Ann Arbor, and legalize psychotropic psilocybin. Research by Dr. Roland Griffiths, head of the Department of Neurosciences at The Johns Hopkins University, has documented their salubrious psychological effects.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKm_mnbN9JY

Sadly, the woods held few edible treasures on this occasion. But time spent in the woods is never time wasted, with or without morels.

Happily, the day ended with a delicious repast, built around the single perfect morel specimen that greeted my eyes in the morning.

Then, off to bed to dream of finding more tomorrow…

Eric Paul Roorda, Ph.D., is an author, artist, and college professor. More importantly, he is a cartoonist and occasional columnist for The Alpena News. His political cartoons appear on Mondays, and "The Whitetail Family," a coloring book in serial form, appears on Saturdays on the Outdoors page. You can order the coloring book for $15 at eproorda@gmail.com.

Editor's Note: Sister Marie Kopin is the 2018 winner of the Harry and Elsie Knighton Service Award, established by the NAMA Board of Trustees to recognize and encourage persons who have distinguished themselves in service to their local clubs. It is named for the Knightons, whose efforts began the North American Mycological Association in 1967.

Sister Marie is also the winner of the 2020 President's Outstanding Service Award. Don Huffman instituted the *President's Outstanding Service Award* during his tenure as President of NAMA to honor persons who have been of outstanding service to NAMA. The award represents the President's personal selection.